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AUTHOR	Jacobs, Gregory S.
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ABSTRACT

This study argues that the desegregation of the Columbus (Ohio) public schools failed to ensure equal educational opportunity not because it was inherently detrimental to learning, but because it was intrinsically incompatible with the city's steady geographic and economic growth. Even before the beginning of busing in 1979, the threat of desegregation had redefined the parameters of single-family home building in the city, turning the boundaries of the Columbus school district into a residential development redline, and moving the resources that follow new home building further from the city's center. The gradual abandonment of urban education in Columbus has resulted in both the concentration of the poor and African American students within the central city school district and the emergence of a politically powerful form of defensive activism in the area's overwhelmingly white suburban school systems. The following chapters are included: (1) "'A Problem for Our Community': Segregation, Litigation, and the Path to 'Penick'" ("Penick" was the Columbus schools desegregation case); (2) "'What We Must Do, We Must Do Well': Implementation, Desegregation, and the Divided Role of MCSC" (Metropolitan Columbus Schools Committee); (3) "Like Squeezing the Center of a Balloon: Busing, Housing, and the Consequences of the Common Areas"; and (4) "Epilogue: Demoralization and Decline." Information was drawn from more than 60 interviews plus other sources. (Contains 2 maps, 1 table, and 215 references.) (SLD)

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